

Characters

- TADASHI
- THE DAZZLER
- THE CONFUSER
- KURO-KO II
- VINCENT
- SATOMI
- CHIKAKO
- MATSUKO
- KURO-KO1

(Five women, two men, and two of either sex for the kuro-ko)

Setting Surreal, as life often is. Spare. A pine tree bent from the wind. A worn wooden portion of a Japanese temple roof frame that is off-kilter and perhaps partially suspended. A full harvest moon that is central to all either exists at center stage or illuminates from center stage. Prominent is a kaleidoscopic, reflective portal which is a womb as well as a border between the mundane world and the world of memory--a prism of the elastic now.

Time and Place 1949-2000. Tokyo, Kansas, California, and the world of memory.

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Workshop Development History Written under the auspices of a Japan Foundation fellowship during a residency in Kyoto, *Waiting for Tadashi* was developed at the George Street Playhouse, New Brunswick, New Jersey, as part of its Next Stage series, May 30-June 4, 2000. As part of this workshop series, the play received its first staged readings. The workshop was directed by Hannah Fujiki DeVorkin.

The play received a second workshop in fall, 2000, courtesy of the University of California at Davis and Sacramento Theatre Company. That workshop was directed by Peggy Shannon, artistic director of Sacramento Theatre Company.

World Premiere at George Street Playhouse The play received its world premiere production at George Street Playhouse, directed by the company's artistic director, David Saint.

Scenic design was by James Youmans, costume design by Theoni V. Aldredge, lighting design by Joe Saint, original music by David Van Tieghem, choreography by Yass Hakoshima.

The cast included Clark Jackson as Tadashi, June Angela as The Dazzler, Sue Jin Song as The Confuser, Sabrina Le Beauf as Chikako and Kuro-ko II, Danny Johnson as Vincent, Takayo Fischer as Satomi, and Mia Tagano as Matsuko and Kuro-ko I.

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Act 1

Act 1, Scene 1

ACT I Scene One

(A stark spotlight fades up center stage in which stands TADASHI LANE — meticulously dressed, cool, handsome.)

TADASHI

Sometimes I remember her scent as she held me close to her breast and I fell into that safe kind of sleep that only love can deliver. But then I wake up and she's gone. It starts to rain.

(sound of light rain falling begins)

Her scent fades.

(a pause)

Mother?

(Immediately, as TADASHI'S imagination takes hold, lights fade up in the portal on THE DAZZLER. She is

a beautiful young Japanese woman, adorned in ethereal, cosmological kimono with long train and lit luminescently in haze. A vision of purity, her skin is rice-powder-white and shadowed in blues; her hair, impossibly long and midnight. From her eyes cascade long, jeweled tears. She stands with arms outstretched. Her entrance is accompanied by music drawn from the traditional Japanese, but rich with a magical, postmodern essence. She slowly slides forward, looking from side to side in slight gestures in a dance of frustration and indecision. From her kimono, she removes a naked beige infant; a feature-less, silken cloth doll. The music accentuates this moment of birth. Reluctantly, respectfully, she offers the infant to the cosmos.)

THE DAZZLER

(a magical voice, evoked with use of a microphone)

The steps of the temple shimmer with rain and you stand out, a crimson pomegranate amid the tiresome green leaves.

(She holds the infant high as she falls to bent knee. With defeat and shame, she sets him atop the moon. He grows luminescent as well.)

THE DAZZLER

(contd.)

Those of us who spend our lives wandering the pines, listening to the wind, are children of the wind and we have no home to call our own.

(in voice-over, a baby's cry is heard, at first quiet and curious)

We watch the moon with exquisite wonder and struggle to translate, but neither love nor language are big enough. The feet move in questions, the heart seeks an address.

(the cry grows troubled and terrified; she ties a poem slip to the infants ankle)

The pines are ever green. The wind is fickle. The moon is blue and cries uselessly of its failure to light the path.

(with remorse she steps away from the baby)

The pines grow thick. Soon the wind will fade away to the final invitation--to silence. And memories will grow louder than silence. And I will not be able to tell you where I am from.

(She looks back and then exits. Lights reduce to a pin on the infant as the cry crescendos and a thunderstorm fades up in the background. Then there is abrupt utter silence. As the *a cappella* song begins, THE DAZZLER returns to comfort the infant as she fights her indecision about abandoning him.)

THE DAZZLER

(contd.)

(sings O. S. blues-like with fear and hope to the tune of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*)

WHEN JOHNNY GOES MARCHING HOME AGAIN, HURRAH, HURRAH
WITH ASIAN WIFE HE MUST DEFEND, HURRAH, HURRAH
AS MOTHERS BRAVE, AS FATHERS BOLD

THEIR GLORIOUS CHILDREN SAVE THEIR SOULS
A NEW WORLD IS BORN WHEN JOHNNY GOES MARCHING HOME.
NEITHER NATION KNOWS WHAT TO DO WITH CHILDREN BORN OF TWO
THE IMPURITY, THE MORAL BLIGHT, A RACIAL WOUND
BUT THE HUMAN WOUND IS YOURS TO BEAR
YOUR FLAGS DISGRACED WHEN YOU DID NOT CARE
THE NEW RACE ASCENDS, A HYBRID THING SO RARE.

(The infants voice-over cry fills the air at the moment the song ends and THEDAZZLER begins to depart. Suddenly, grotesque, quasi-Japanese music begins and THE CONFUSER emerges from the portal wearing a Japanese Woman mask that reflects a twisted, demonic gaiety. The essence of the grotesque, she is dressed in a fantastical, clownish, garish ensemble. She is manly and rotund in carriage; she sports a parasol. Her entrance startles and frightens THEDAZZLER as THE CONFUSER does a double-take toward the infant.)

THE CONFUSER

(magical voice, evoked by use of microphone)

What is this? What is this thing?

(As THE CONFUSER pokes the infant with her parasol, THE DAZZLER reacts as if she too has been poked.)

THE DAZZLER

(looking at THE CONFUSER)

What is this? What is this thing?

(THE CONFUSER kicks the infant and THEDAZZLER reacts as if she has been kicked. THE CONFUSER picks up the infant as if it is dirty, smells it, and reacts with distaste.)

THE CONFUSER

My goodness, you're a baby! Hey, maybe you're one of those half-American mongrels!

(growls as if to agitate, reads the poem slip and then laughs mockingly)

Sometimes love is not enough? you'd better believe it!

(another grotesque laugh)

(Enter KURO-KO in prototypical Japanese radio announcer mask.)

KURO-KO

Good morning, Japan! We've been blessed with the presence of U. S. troops for some time, but today is an auspicious day! The first child of mixed Japanese and American parentage was born this morning! A symbol of love and friendship between the Land of the Rising Sun and the Land of Milk and Honey! A rainbow across the Pacific! The first gift of the Occupation!

(exits)

THE CONFUSER

How fortunate! How auspicious indeed! And even if you're not a half-half, I'll make you into one! Better yet, I'll make you into a bonafide American! Yes that would be good! Very good! I'm gonna make you a star!

(THE DAZZLER exits in pain; microphone use ends for her.)

TADASHI

No!

(He reaches towards the infant, but never makes contact as THE CONFUSER seizes the infant and rushes out; microphone use ends for her. TADASHI stands in center light breaking out of a cold sweat, moving slowly to a state of relief.)

TADASHI

(contd.)

Good. Good. I'm home again. Stay present, Tadashi, be present. That demon who ran the orphanage is history. It's all behind you. You're here in your house, with your woman: Magdalena. You're safe. All's well. Right Magdalena?

(Afro Asian fusion music fades up. Gracefully, TADASHI dances, enjoying himself. From the portal emerges KURO-KOII, her persona and mask that of an attractive Caucasian woman--MAGDALENA. She carries a small suitcase. He beckons to her, but she waves her hand back and forth in front of her bosom, a farewell which disturbs TADASHI.)

KURO-KO II

Wrong, Tadashi. I'm leaving you.

TADASHI

No.

KURO-KO II

Oh yes.

(she nods)

No, Magdalena, don't abandon me. I know you're not my wife. But you are my life. This has worked for fifteen years. I'll be fifty in August, the millennium ends in December. Don't leave, Mom--

KURO-KO II

Excuse me?

TADASHI

I mean, Magdalena. Of course you're Magdalena. My center. My goddess. Come, come dance with me.

KURO-KO II

No thanks. I've been dancing too long already.

TADASHI

Fine then. Go. I do love you, Magdalena, but love gets tired.

KURO-KO II

It certainly does. Ciao, baby.

(exits)

TADASHI

Get the hell out and don't come back. Every woman in my life is always leaving. Who needs them.

(stops dancing and the music ceases; a sobering moment)

The last time a woman I truly needed left me, I almost didn't make it. How am I going to navigate without her?

(THE CONFUSER enters, startling and disturbing TADASHI. She carries a Negro-Impersonator Minstrel outfit [i. e., gaudy, swallow-tailed coat, tambourine, rattling bones minstrel instrument, and mesh black half-mask.])

THE CONFUSER

(as she forces him to his knees)

You've lost your center again, haven't you, boy-san? Magdalena's gone just like Mama, or maybe they're all one and the same. Don't you get it? You never found your center to begin with. So you better start looking! Again! Come on, boy-san. Come on back to the days of Mama-chama and your beloved orphanage.

TADASHI

No!

THE CONFUSER

Careful! Memory can kill you!

(forces the minstrel outfit on him; in fear, he complies)

Come on, you can impersonate a Negro better than Al Jolson, just like you can impersonate a Jap better than Marlon Brando.

(chants)

DONT MATTA WHERE MAMMY FROM OR WHERE SHE GO
SHE SLEEP WITH A G. I., SHE STILL A HO
MOON DONT SHINE ON YO KIND
GOOD FOLKS CANT PAY YOU NO MIND
SO DANCE BOY-SAN, STEP AND FETCH IT
BUT NOT TOO CLOSE! WE DONT WANNA KETCH IT.

(THE CONFUSER blackens his face and smashes the tambourine against his chest. As interpretive minstrel

music fades up, in full minstrelsy, TADASHI shows his teeth and dances. She rattles the minstrel bones and dances along. VINCENT, a tall, handsome African American man in a military policeman's uniform, appears. When he first sees TADASHI, he approaches with apprehension as he thinks it is a minstrel show. He claps politely as TADASHI ends his dance with a full Jolson finish. THE CONFUSER looks at VINCENT as though he is dinner. TADASHI is fascinated with VINCENT.)

THE CONFUSER

May I help you, kind sir?

VINCENT

I'm sorry. From the roadway, I thought this little boy was a colored boy.

THE CONFUSER

He is! He is!

VINCENT

No, this is merely a Negro Impersonator. I thought he was areal Negro. Whats this all about, ma'am? I didn't know Tokyo was famous for minstrels.

(She quickly wipes off the coal from TADASHI'S face using her hand and saliva, rips off the costume with TADASHI'S assistance, and takes the tambourine. The fired coals fade out.)

THE CONFUSER

No! We don't do that kind of thing in Japan. Look! He's just a boy! Half-Japanese and half-colored! Rare, extraordinary object! Like a Gauguin!

VINCENT

Why it is a boy. Hi son.

TADASHI

(shyly approaches VINCENT)

Are you a Negro Impersonator, too?

(tries to wipe off the color on VINCENT'S cheek and is surprised when it does not come off)

VINCENT

No, I'm the real thing. Vincent Lane, Sergeant First Class, 207th Military Police Company, United States Army. I had an Indian mother, but the rest of me is all colored.

TADASHI

I've never seen one of you.

VINCENT

And I've never seen one of you, but you sure are cute.

TADASHI

Thank you. You are, too.

VINCENT

(amused)

Thanks, son.

TADASHI

We kinda look alike.

VINCENT

Kind of, but not really. You're something new, something entirely different.

THE CONFUSER

But he does look like you.

VINCENT

But he looks Oriental too. Like an Indonesian.

THE CONFUSER

But, regardless, you like him, yes? New hot item?

VINCENT

Here, son.

(VINCENT hands TADASHI a chocolate bar, which THE CONFUSER snatches away.)

THE CONFUSER

He can have it later after the children eat dinner.

VINCENT

So is he your grandson?

THE CONFUSER

HEAVENS NO! This is an orphanage. Hes the only half-breed here, but we take good care of Tadashi.

(gives TADASHI a sharp glance)

Isn't that right?

VINCENT

Is that your name, son? Tadashi?

THE CONFUSER

Who knows. Tadashi Kawada was the name of the government official who found him on the steps of a temple. The boy was malnourished, riddled with disease. I saved him from death. He calls me Mama, don't you, boy-san?

(pokes him)

TADASHI

(emotionlessly)

Mama.

THE CONFUSER

See?

VINCENT

He looks a little thin to me.

THE CONFUSER

Yes, were all a little underfed.

(sucks in her gut as VINCENT surveys her portliness)

Times are hard after the war, you know. We do our best, but...

(VINCENT looks at TADASHI and makes a decision. He whistles loudly and two KURO-KO, using stylized but quick movement, pull in a wagon full of staple goods, making it hard for THE CONFUSER to control her ecstasy. Exit KURO-KO.)

VINCENT

Will this be enough? Flour, rice, soy sauce, canned meats, and beans?

THE CONFUSER

Your generosity overwhelms me, kind sir! Thank you ever so!

VINCENT

Tadashi, you take care of yourself, okay?

TADASHI

But will I see you again?

VINCENT

Of course, son. I'll be back to see you as long as I'm stationed in Japan, okay?

TADASHI

But then where will you go?

VINCENT

Back to America.

TADASHI

America? ! Wow!

VINCENT

Your other country. Maybe one day you'll go there and learn about your other half. As for me, no reason to stick around here any longer than necessary.

(Up stage, THE DAZZLER appears as the luminescent moon. VINCENT is awestruck by this vision, as is TADASHI. THECONFUSER is annoyed.)

VINCENT

(contd.)

No reason at all...

TADASHI

Whats that? !

THE CONFUSER

What? That? That's just the full moon.

(Then SATOMI appears in kimono from behind THE DAZZLER who retreats and exits as the luminescence overtakes SATOMI.)

VINCENT

Yes indeed it is.

THE CONFUSER

Don't look at it too long or you'll go crazy!

TADASHI

I think, I think that's my mommy!

VINCENT

(sympathetic)

No, no it isn't, son. But then again a goddess is everybody's mother, isn't she?

TADASHI

Goddess? Yes, yes! The Goddess! I've been looking for her! ! !

(As VINCENT and TADASHI stare at the vision of SATOMI, lights smash-cut, blacking out on everything on stage [exit VINCENT, SATOMI except for a spotlight on TADASHI, on the periphery of which stands THE CONFUSER.]

TADASHI

No, no! What happened? Where did they go? Please bring them back! He called me son didn't he?

(THE CONFUSER picks up the minstrel outfit and tambourine and bones, shaking them at him as he backs away.)

THE CONFUSER

You're not going anywhere, boy-san. You're my prize exhibit, my own little personal casualty of war. Gotta work on your act, you hear me? You're a good boy, but a darn poor nigger. If you dance real good, Mama-chamas going to give you a big bowl of day-old rice! Real rice! Not the converted kind they eat in America! Now lets hoe-down!

(The minstrel music begins again. TADASHI screams loud and long as the music becomes cacophony: sounds of war, troops, bombings, and the firestorm lights of war, during which THE CONFUSER exits with all paraphernalia, including her treasured staple goods. Suddenly, all sound and lights abruptly cease, leaving TADASHI down stage center, enervated and resolved. Present-day.)

TADASHI

(frantically touches clothing, face, arms to make sure he's all right)

Good. Okay. I'm me. It's me. See what you've done, Magdalena! You've shaken my center. All my life, people have demanded that I impersonate someone else. No more. Game over. This is my life. Nobody gets to tell me how to live it. I gotta go back, back to the goddess, so that I can finally move forward — my way.

(moves center stage to the moonlight)

Let the odyssey begin. Tadashi goes marching home.

(a pause, then:)

But what if Mom doesn't want to see me?

(a thought that shakes him to the core)

What if... what if the goddess is dead?

(Down stage, KURO-KO as a television talk show host appears with CHIKAKO, sophisticated, feminine. Bright TV lights upon them. TADASHI appears at center stage moon as fascinated observer.)

KURO-KO

So, Dr. Lane, you're an award-winning author and professor raising a son on your own. Yet the area of your life people most like to talk about is your race, or at least what they THINK is your race. Uh, what exactly IS

your race?

CHIKAKO

Amerasian. Hapa. Or Afro-Asian.

KURO-KO

Fascinating. But you're not an orphan, your English is impeccable, your mother isn't a prostitute, and your intellect is unquestionable. How do you account for that?

CHIKAKO

You're not an orphan either, your I. Q. seems decent and your use of English is quite impeccable, too. What is your mothers profession?

KURO-KO

Uh, sorry. So many stereotypes about you pagan war babies! I understand you have a long-lost brother. One of the first Amerasians born in Japan after World War II, an orphan your parents adopted.

TADASHI

I'm not an orphan.

CHIKAKO

(troubled, suppressing it)

Yes, hes been missing for fifteen years. I've tried to find him, but my attempts have led me nowhere.

TADASHI

Then you're on the right track, Chikako, because that's where I live — nowhere.

KURO-KO

Well, you know, you probably never thought about this, Dr. Lane, but maybe your long-lost brother doesn't want to be found, not by you anyway. Or maybe hes dead.

CHIKAKO

(struck sadly by what shed never considered)

P-perhaps that could be the case.

KURO-KO

Bury him in your mind, Girlfriend! Imagine that funeral and move on with your life.

(exits brusquely)

TADASHI

No, no! Chikako don't listen to her!

(CHIKAKO moves down stage, shadowed by TADASHI as they move in one light. SATOMI and MATSUKO enter and join the funeral. MATSUKO is a no-nonsense, take-no-prisoners woman. She and SATOMI kneel beside CHIKAKO.)

CHIKAKO

It's like that with soldiers missing in action, right? There's no grave to go to, no body to pray over. Then you can never move from anger to grief, and from grief to finally letting go.

(burns incense)

Accept my prayer on behalf of Tadashi Kawada Lane. No one took him into their arms and blessed him when he was a baby, so could you do that for him now? Something from the gut, please, something totally original. Like us.

CHIKAKO & MATSUKO

When you make something new, make room for it.

SATOMI

Sa. Owari. He ceremoniously dead. Now, I finally put him behind me. You can, too.

(As the daughters watch, SATOMI exits brusquely. They look at each other in dismay as lights abruptly go out; they exit. TADASHI quivers in the center of the moon as its glow fades in.)

TADASHI

No! Please don't bury me alive, Goddess. Just a little more time.

(removes a map from his pocket and studies it)

I'll take this route. I could get to Kansas in three days. The goddess will be there. And shell be so happy that I'm not dead.

(THE CONFUSER enters with a Nohdemonlionwig, yukata, and mesh yolk-yellow half-mask. She snatches the map from him.)

THE CONFUSER

Do you really think God or Buddha or anybody would give you a map that showed you the way to make sense of your miserable life?

(tears up the map)

There is no goddess, no center for people like you. You were born lost and hungry, and you stay lost and hungry. And my part in this Greek tragedy is to clean up the mess.

TADASHI

But, Mama-chama, my mothers in Kansas.

THE CONFUSER

She buried you, baby.

TADASHI

But I buried you, too!

THE CONFUSER

I'll never be dead to you, boy-san. Not like you are to your mama and the trail of girlfriends you've left behind. You're a ghost to them. Ghosts drift. But me, I'm a demon. I'll stick to you like vomit.

(Distressed, he picks up the pieces of the map and puts them in his pocket. Dramatic traditional Japanese music fades up to a low level in the b. g., causing TADASHI to look to and fro for its source.)

THE CONFUSER

Whew! Will you look at that? Sometimes the Rising Sun can be pretty darn uncomfortable!

(TADASHI cowers and shrinks into his boy-like posture. She starts to rub the chalk on his face.)

TADASHI

W-w-what are you doing?

THE CONFUSER

Bring in you back, boy. Bring in you all the way back. That's my job.

TADASHI

Is this the orphanage? It's the orphanage, isn't it

THE CONFUSER

See, Tadashi? Who needs a map when you know your place?

TADASHI

(completely reverted to a young boy)

Good morning, Mama-chama.

THE CONFUSER

Yeah, whatever. Look, boy-san. Some white G. I. s are coming today; we really gotta impress em. I'm gonna yellow-face you, make you an Oriental Impersonator. Maybe we can't make you look exactly Japanese, but you'd make a good little Indonesian! Hell, we don't even need to banana you up for that!

(O. S. the KURO-KO as children sing *Zo-san* in low tones.)

TADASHI

Just let me go play with the other children, please, Mama-chama?

THE CONFUSER

Are you crazy? These perfect Japanese children won't know what to make of you! You're a good boy, Tadashi, but a darn poor Jap!

TADASHI

I'll go to America with Sgt. Lane! I will!

THE CONFUSER

Come here, boy-san.

(Reluctantly, he approaches as the KURO-KO exits and their singing fades out.)

TADASHI

Yes, Mama-chama?

THE CONFUSER

He doesn't really want you. He says he does, but he doesn't. Typical soldier boy.

TADASHI

But Sgt. Lane is different. He called me son.

THE CONFUSER

But hes American. Hell go the way of Uncle Sam every time. And America doesn't want you.

(She indicates for him to look down stage as a KURO-KO enters with American Radio Broadcaster mask.)

KURO-KO

(American broadcasters voice, nasal, official)

Don't worry, America. Our anti-Oriental immigration policy will keep us safe from those half-Japanese children they're trying to dump on us. It's the Japanese libido and general lewdness of the yellow race that led our red-blooded, all-American boys astray. So they're freed of responsibility, no paternity!

(Writing on a pad, second KURO-KO enters with an American Journalist Mask.)

KURO-KO II

(the bleeding-heart liberal)

Shabby second-rate orphanages are springing up all over Tokyo, stuffed full of mixed-race babies. Two owners of such slum orphanages have been arrested for starving more than 100 Occupation half-half babies.

KURO-KO

An American journalist was kicked out of Japan today by order of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers due to his report of starvation of Occupation babies in slum orphanages. This report is absolutely false. Both Japan and the U. S. are doing everything in their power to take care of these children. Bon voyage, ya bleeding heart liberal!

(KURO-KO thumb their chins at each other and exit in opposite directions. THECONFUSER sympathetically pats TADASHI.)

THE CONFUSER

See, boy-san? At least I give you rice if you dance real good and make the Americans bring nice staple goods for Mama-chama.

TADASHI

What about my chocolate bar?

THE CONFUSER

I gave it to the other children.

TADASHI

But — but —

THE CONFUSER

So they would like you more. Wasn't that sweet of me!

TADASHI

Thank you. So Sgt. Lane isn't coming back?

THE CONFUSER

Who's taken care of you since you were a baby? Mama-chama, right?

TADASHI

You won't leave me, Mama-chama?

THE CONFUSER

Never, boy-san.

TADASHI

Promise?

THE CONFUSER

Promise.

TADASHI

I love you, Mama-chama.

THE CONFUSER

That's nice. Now go back to your room and--

TADASHI

No, Mama-chama!

THE CONFUSER

It's a nice room and--

TADASHI

Please let me stay out just a little bit longer

THE CONFUSER

(hardening)

Appreciate your room. You could be living on the street if it wasn't for me. You could be dead. Now go.

(He nods, bows low to her as she exits. He sits down stage and the light reduces to a pin on his face.)

TADASHI

My room is small. I am small. I am shrinking. Does Sgt. Lane love me? Does Mama-chama love me? Where is the goddess? Why did she leave me all alone on the temple steps?

(The KURO-KO enter, barely perceptible on the edge of the darkness.)

KURO-KO & KURO-KO II

(stage whisper)

It doesn't matter where the goddess is. Who needs a goddess when you don't even have a country?

TADASHI

This is my country!

KURO-KO & KURO-KO II

(stage whisper)

This is our country!

TADASHI

No fair. Somebody give me a country.

KURO-KO

Mixed-race occupation babies will result in weakened intelligence and development of a hostile minority in our society's dulcet conformity

KURO-KO II

We have much in common with the mixed-bloods. They can't belong to us because they're not Japanese and

we can't belong to the worlds upper echelon because were not white. Of course, were closest to white than any other race and we've sucked up western culture like pigs, but we never became white. They're waiting for a country just like were waiting to be number one--well, at least number two?

KURO-KO

Eleanor Roosevelt, Pearl Buck, James Michener say, America, adopt these unfortunates! But America prefers European orphans.

KURO-KO II

You American G. I. s sure are some potent husky pups!

KURO-KO

Heavens to Butterfly, gentlemen!

KURO-KO II

June, 1952. *Shosetsu Shincho* publishes a cartoon: Mixed Race Children Problem.

KURO-KO

(gesture vigorously towards TADASHI to tell the joke)

Hit it, boy-san!

TADASHI

Half black Japanese boy graduates with highest scores in his class, enters Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promoted quickly to the diplomatic corps! And his assignments the best part! Hes so Japanese! So darn excellent! But they still assign him to the jungle! But at least its a jungle in Guam! At least its an Asian jungle! He can have bananas and rice in one sitting!

(The KURO-KO laugh uproariously and exit. TADASHI laughs with them at first until he realizes that the joke is on him. THECONFUSER enters and applauds. Dramatic traditional Japanese music fades up.)

THE CONFUSER

Brilliant, Kabuki Kid! Well done! Don't stop now. Dance, boy-san!

(louder)

Dance, boy-san!

(screaming)

DANCE!

(Finally, he succumbs and puts on the wighead-piece. The spotlight gradually widens. He starts to dance, striking one tortured pose after another akin to Kabuki-no-mie. SHAPE-SHIFTER-CONFUSER demands more, coaching his movement. Frantically, he tries to provide, but it isn't good enough. VINCENT enters bearing gifts and TADASHI dances even harder. The music and dance end. TADASHI runs up to VINCENT.)

TADASHI

Sgt. Lane! You came back, you came back!

VINCENT

(taken aback)

Do I know you, Mr. Japanese Demon?

TADASHI

It's me! Tadashi! I'm an Oriental Impersonator!

VINCENT

But why can't you just be yourself, son?

TADASHI

There is no myself, right, Mama-chama?

THE CONFUSER

Because you are special, boy-chama!

VINCENT

Irreplaceable and don't you forget it. I'd've come back sooner, but Mama-chama told me how sick you were.

TADASHI

(looks at Mama-chama in surprise)

Sick?

(she glares at him)

Yes. Sick. Very sick.

THE CONFUSER

From eating that candy you left him! Less candy! More meat!

VINCENT

You look cute in this little get-up.

TADASHI

Yes, but don't you see its just like the other? negro impersonator, Oriental Impersonator, and no real Tadashi!

VINCENT

No, this one is entertaining. Mama-chama, there's a jeep-load of staple goods for you out there so you can

keep well-fed. Tadashi, you're still looking kind skinny.

THE CONFUSER

It's because he dances too much. Did you tell your guy to take the jeep in the back?

(VINCENT nods)

Good. Good boy.

(exits as TADASHI removes wig)

VINCENT

Boy?

(pause of disbelief, then:)

Son, do you like Mama-chama?

TADASHI

(looks around, afraid she can hear)

I LOVE Mama-chama.

VINCENT

You sure?

TADASHI

(sounding like a rehearsed speech)

Mama-chama saved me. Mama-chamas the world. Mama-chamas my center. Mama-chamas divine. Mama-chama--

VINCENT

Okay, okay son. Whatever you say. Guess what? I found the goddess.

TADASHI

You did?

VINCENT

I asked her to marry me and she said yes.

TADASHI

She did?

VINCENT

Sure enough. I'm going to take her back to the States with me.

TADASHI

She's so lucky. If I marry you, can I go back to the States?

VINCENT

(laughs)

Do you know what marriage is, Tadashi? It's when two people fall in love, trust each other as friends, and then pledge their love for life in front of God and everybody.

TADASHI

Who is God and why does he get to decide who goes to America?

VINCENT

(amused)

Never mind, Tadashi. Well save that lesson for another time.

TADASHI

You found the goddess. Wow. Can I meet her?

VINCENT

I'm going to tell her all about you and then I'll bring her here to meet you, okay?

TADASHI

Hooray! Only, if Mama-chama tells you I'm sick, come and see me anyway, okay?

VINCENT

Deal.

(digs in his pocket, produces a chocolate bar)

This is for you.

(opens it and feeds it to him)

Enjoy it now. Don't save it for later.

TADASHI

But Mama-chama will get mad.

VINCENT

How about if we just don't tell her?

TADASHI

But shell smell it on my breath and then shell--

VINCENT

What?

TADASHI

Shell just get mad, that's all.

VINCENT

Here, eat it then rinse out your mouth, okay, son?

TADASHI

Okay, Sgt. Lane.

VINCENT

Just call me Papa.

TADASHI

Papa? Whats that? Is that your first name?

VINCENT

Yeah, Tadashi. That's my name. That's what you're going to call me. Good-bye for now, son.

(kisses him on the cheek)

Now you give me some sugar, too.

(for a moment TADASHI is confused, but VINCENT points to his cheek and TADASHI kisses him; VINCENT exits)

(TADASHI bows in VINCENT'S direction and remains so. But the SHAPE-SHIFTERCONFUSER enters. TADASHI tries to run.)

THE CONFUSER

(contd.)

(captures him; vigorously rubs off yellow make-up)

Don't you even think of leaving here. I'll track you down wherever you are; and I'll drag you right back into the nightmare that is your despicable, worthless life.

(She throws him down like debris and marches out. He trembles in her wake. Lights grow bright.)

TADASHI

Okay, Tadashi. Focus. Focus. Gotta get to Kansas. Gotta find Mom. I was saved once before. Who says it can't happen again?

(Lights cross-fade...)

Act 1, Scene 2

Scene Two

(A spotlight illuminates the center stage moon. TADASHI walks into it.)

TADASHI

(trying to muster courage)

Okay, Tadashi, just ring the bell. Just ring it and wait for the goddess to open the door. And shell smile and say...

(THE DAZZLER enters as the luminescent young Japanese woman. On the opposite side of the stage enters SATOMI, who mouths THE DAZZLERS words:)

THE DAZZLER

Tadashi?

TADASHI

Or maybe even...

THE DAZZLER

Son?

TADASHI

And then shell give me a scolding glance and say...

THE DAZZLER

Where have you been all these years? Why did you go away for so long?

(THE DAZZLER stops pacing and stares at him; he is slightly aware of her presence, but does not trust it. She exits.)

TADASHI

I always imagined it would be like that. I hope it's something like that. I hope shell let me in, let me sit at the kitchen table, and give me a cup of green tea. Here goes.

(He reaches out as if to press a doorbell and doorbell chimes are heard. He pulls himself together as KURO-KO II enters wearing the mask of a prototypical Kansas housewife.)

KURO-KO II

Yes?

TADASHI

(shocked)

Uh, I'm looking for my mother.

KURO-KO II

Your mother? I'm sorry, she isn't here.

TADASHI

When will she be back?

KURO-KO II

I mean, I don't know your mother. She doesn't live here.

TADASHI

But she's always lived here. My father bought this house for her when they came back from Japan.

KURO-KO II

Oh, the Oriental woman.

TADASHI

Yes, yes, that's right. A beautiful Japanese woman.

KURO-KO II

She's gone, long gone. Sorry.

TADASHI

(absorbs this, tries to hold back tears)

Gone? Oh god. I'm too late.

KURO-KO II

Fraid so.

TADASHI

(tries to pull himself together)

Uh, do you know where she's buried?

KURO-KO II

Buried? Oh no, no, no. We bought the house from her five years ago. She moved to California, to Los

Angeles I think, to be closer to her daughters.

TADASHI

Ohhhh. Okay, thank you so much.

KURO-KO II

Wanna come in and see your old house? Been a while since you called this place home, huh?

TADASHI

(looks out toward audience)

Or any place, for that matter.

KURO-KO II

(an attempt to be personal, with a smile, terrible pronunciation of sayonara)

Well, SAY-YA-NAIR-UH!

(KURO-KO II exits and he looks after her blankly.)

TADASHI

Yeah, hasta la vista, madam.

(The center stage moon grows brighter and beckons to him. He stands in its light.)

TADASHI

(contd.)

I call Los Angeles information. Chikakos unlisted, but Matsuko — there she is.

(A telephone rings and a spotlight fades up on MATSUKO. Both look outward toward audience.)

MATSUKO

Hello. Lane-Chang residence.

TADASHI

Chang?

MATSUKO

That's what I said. May I help you?

TADASHI

That's a dangerous question to put out there.

MATSUKO

Oh my goodness. Is it — is it you?

TADASHI

I think so.

MATSUKO

Where the hell have you been, big brother?

TADASHI

Look, I'll explain later. Wheres Mom?

MATSUKO

I don't know if I should tell you since you left us without looking back. And thanks for asking how I'm doing. Mom lives here with me, Tadashi.

TADASHI

Oh. May I come to visit? Can I come home?

MATSUKO

Just remember, don't come unless you really mean it.

TADASHI

Mean what?

MATSUKO

Figure it out, Tadashi. I'll be waiting for you.

(Light fades out on MATSUKO.)

TADASHI

California here I come! There's gold in them thar hills!

(The moon fades out as he exits and lights cross-fade as he enters the portal and closes his eyes...)

Act 1, Scene 3

Scene Three

(Lights rise to full as MATSUKO enter spacing. CHIKAKO enters anxiously.)

CHIKAKO

Every time you call me using that deep, slow voice and preceding with, Chikako, something serious has happened, I think somebody has died. Whats going on, Matsuko?

MATSUKO

Tadashi. Tadashi is alive.

CHIKAKO

(overcome with emotion)

Hes alive?

MATSUKO

He called. Hes been living in Florida for the last fifteen years.

CHIKAKO

But why didn't he ever call or write?

MATSUKO

Maybe he still hasn't grown up.

CHIKAKO

You know hes always been a wanderer, looking for something. Me, too.

MATSUKO

Take off the rose-colored glasses and you'll find that thing in a microsecond. It's called life and you just live it. Don't think so much. Don't dream so much.

CHIKAKO

Did you... did you tell Mom?

MATSUKO

You tell her.

CHIKAKO

No way. You tell her.

MATSUKO

This is like when you announced you were going to have a child on your own. Give me a chance to make it across the state line before you tell her.

CHIKAKO

But you're her one child who did everything right. Went into business, the smart and reliable field; married a Chinese American and you know Mom thinks Chinese men make the best husbands--and then you had two children: Japanese design for living. I'm the rebel-artist-wandering-intellectual-independent-single-parent-who-wont-get-married; the Other Real daughter. You'd better tell her that Tadashi is back. It'll be more palatable coming from you.

MATSUKO

Maybe she loved him too much.

CHIKAKO

Maybe she didn't love him enough.

(pause, uncomfortable)

MATSUKO

And then there was the fire.

CHIKAKO

Fire?

MATSUKO

Chikako, every time I try to talk to you about it, your face goes blank.

CHIKAKO

You're older than I am. You remember things I cant.

MATSUKO

No. I remember things you wont.

CHIKAKO

Honestly, Matsuko. Why wouldn't I want to remember? Have I ever been afraid of anything in my life?

MATSUKO

Yes.

CHIKAKO

What?

MATSUKO

Tadashi.

CHIKAKO

Negative.

MATSUKO

Okay, fine.

CHIKAKO

You want some tea? I think I need a cup of tea.

(CHIKAKO starts to exit, but the present day SATOMI enters with mending that she hands to MATSUKO.)

SATOMI

I finish your mending. See how edge of hem sewn and then I tuck under.

MATSUKO

Thanks, Mom.

CHIKAKO

Okaasan, I have something to tell you.

SATOMI

Hai. Nani?

CHIKAKO

Mom, Tadashi isn't dead.

MATSUKO

Wow. Subtle, Chikako.

CHIKAKO

Well.

SATOMI

(a pause, then:)

Maybe he better off dead in this kind of world.

CHIKAKO

Is that true for me, too? And Matsuko? And our children?

SATOMI

Tadashi have hard time. He never finish himself like you, like Matsuko.

CHIKAKO

Nobody's ever finished, Okaasan.

MATSUKO

... Tadashi's coming here tomorrow...

SATOMI

(startled, tries to hide it)

I no be here. I have some plan.

MATSUKO

You cannot be herein whatever way you like, but he's coming and this is my house that you live in now, so, if you don't want to see him, I suggest you take a drive or hide in your room.

SATOMI

Tomorrow, I very busy. I go to tea with friends.

(with stoic expression, she exits)

CHIKAKO

What if she won't see him?

MATSUKO

Hes not coming just to see her.

CHIKAKO

I think he is.

(On the women's exchanged, serious glance, lights cross-fade...)

Act 1, Scene 4

Scene Four

(Lights fade up on TADASHI illuminated by the center stage moon as he studies his map.)

TADASHI

Ventura Freeway, San Diego Freeway, Santa Monica Freeway.

(Enter CONFUSER.)

THE CONFUSER

(overlapping with TADASHI:)

... San Diego Freeway, Santa Monica Freeway. Listen to me, Tadashi. Forget about California. Why do you need to go there? Don't you remember? The goddess didn't want you.

(This defeats TADASHI. He falls to his knees, reverting to boyhood and THECONFUSER pats his head like a dog.)

THE CONFUSER

(contd.)

Don't waste your gas. And don't waste her time. So what'll it be today, boy-san?

TADASHI

No, you can't take me back now. I'm too close.

THE CONFUSER

And I'm even closer! Come on, boy-san. Choose one or the other. Oriental impersonator or Negro impersonator? Yellow-face, black-face?

(The sound of a car driving up and stopping is heard in voice-over, perhaps an image of the front of the car appears. TADASHI jumps up in excitement.)

TADASHI

Sgt. Lanes here! I can't wait to meet the goddess! She's

THE CONFUSER

Just remember. Do as I say or you know what right?

TADASHI

(terrified)

No! Not that, not that!

(Enter VINCENT looking impeccable in his military dress uniform, but hes very sad. At first, TADASHI is excited, but his excitement recedes as he takes in VINCENT'S countenance.)

TADASHI

Papa?

VINCENT

Hi, son. How you doing?

TADASHI

You take me to America today? Listen, Papa! I pledge allegiance to the flag of the —

VINCENT

Son, son, hold on a minute.

TADASHI

Wheres the goddess? I want to meet the goddess! Papa's wife, my mama, yes?

VINCENT

She's in the car, son. But listen to me for just a minute. She's not feeling too well. Were going to have our first baby in about eight months and she's sick to her stomach.

TADASHI

Oh, poor goddess. I promise I'll be quiet. So I'm going to be a big brother?

VINCENT

Tadashi...

TADASHI

Yes, Papa?

VINCENT

... I'm not going to be able to take you to America with me.

TADASHI

What? But why not? I thought... I thought... You said--

VINCENT

It's not what you think, son, its just that Satomi, that's my wife, well, she has strange ideas about adoption being taboo.

TADASHI

Whatstaboomean?

VINCENT

Something that you... well, something that you shouldn't do.

THE CONFUSER

(smugly)

Something unthinkable, FORBIDDEN!

VINCENT

Now, just a minute, Mama-chama, I--

TADASHI

The goddess doesn't like me? But she never met me. Please tell her to say hello to me. Maybe I can dance for her. Maybe then shed like me.

VINCENT

You don't need to dance for Satomi or for anybody else, unless you want to, you hear me, son?

TADASHI

I'm not your son, am I? And I never will be. The goddess doesn't want me. I'm trash, a dog, a monkey, just

like Mama-chamasaid.

THE CONFUSER

Just like WHO said, my little Rice Ball?

TADASHI

I-I mean the other kids. That's what the other kids said.

VINCENT

Well, don't you pay them no mind.

TADASHI

You promised me you'd take me back with you.

VINCENT

Truth is, I don't know what I'm taking you back to anyway. I don't know if the American dream is truly available to us. Maybe one day.

TADASHI

Just let me see the Goddess. Just let me look at her onetime, let me touch her hand.

VINCENT

I'm sorry, son. She's not getting out of the car.

TADASHI

That's a big car. It must be an American car.

VINCENT

Studebaker. See the metal seam at the window?

TADASHI

And is that her? That glow behind the glass? I've always dreamed a mother would look like that.

VINCENT

Son, she's just a woman, but a very special one. She just says you're too old to adopt.

TADASHI

I'll have to live my whole life here with Mama-chama.

VINCENT

I'm so sorry.

TADASHI

I waited for you. From the first time you called me son, I waited for you to take me home. And what was I waiting for? Nothing, nothing.

(TADASHI weeps. VINCENT gives him a handkerchief. THE CONFUSER kindly, sympathetically enfolds him in her arms. She motions for VINCENT to go.)

THE CONFUSER

Go on, Sgt. Lane. Hes my favorite. I'll take care of him. But you shouldn't build up a little boys hopes and then just let them come crashing down. He waited all his life for you to come take him home.

VINCENT

(ashamed, sad)

Yes. Yes, I know. Forgive me.

(exits)

(THE CONFUSER pries the weeping TADASHI from her.)

THE CONFUSER

All right. Shows over. Lets get ready for the next sucker.

TADASHI

(his spirit broken, TADASHI follows her command)

Yes, Mama-chama.

(THE CONFUSER paints his face half in black-face and half in yellow-face as she hums *When Johnny Comes Marching Home.*)

THE CONFUSER

That's my boy-san, born to sing and dance. Show your stuff, boy-san. What are you waiting for? Huh?

(Minstrel music confused with dramatic traditional Japanese music collides and TADASHI tries to dance, not having much luck as THE CONFUSER takes out a tambourine, and shakes it commandingly.)

THE CONFUSER

(contd.)

Dance, boy-san, dance!

(Applause and AD-LIBBED American male voices shout their enthusiasm for TADASHI: Thatta boy, Cool! All right! Bravo! A — OK! But it fades as TADASHI'S will fades. In a frenzied fit, he stops dancing. Using the handkerchief that VINCENT gave him, he smears off the paint and removes the Japanese paraphernalia. Infuriated, THECONFUSER shakes the tambourine at him, threatens him with it, and man-handles him to the floor as he cowers.)

THE CONFUSER

(contd.)

You're going to get it now!

TADASHI

No, no! Not that!

THE CONFUSER

Lie down you worthless monkey. Lie down on your back as filthy and mangy as the day I found you.

TADASHI

(scared, weeping, he lies down)

Mama, mama, mama.

THE CONFUSER

(mocking him, laughs)

Mama! Mama! Mama!

(Up stage, moonlight illuminates THE DAZZLER as the luminescent moon. Behind her enters SATOMI in eyelet American dress. She shadows THE DAZZLER and they move in sync, watching with pained expressions. THE CONFUSER removes her kimono.)

TADASHI

Please, Mama-chama, no. I promise to dance just like you say!

THE CONFUSER

Silence, you bastard. You're never going home, Tadashi. Never.

(THE DAZZLER and SATOMI bend with pain, fall to their knees, bow down to the floor. With all of her energy, THE CONFUSER lifts her kimono and squats on TADASHI, suffocating him. TADASHI coughs, splutters, and screams the birth-cry joined by the chanting wail of the mothers up stage. All exit as he fights his way out of his dilemma and tries to recover. Lights cross-fade.)

Act 1, Scene 5

Scene Five

(Lights fade up on TADASHI.)

TADASHI

Come on, Tadashi. Stay on track. You're almost there. Mama-chama can't hurt you anymore. She's dead. Get her outta your head, man. It's your real mother you're going to see. The one who raised you. The true goddess.

(looks confidently at his map)

Welcome to California, the Golden State.

(looks up and outward at audience)

Will you be golden for me?

(Down stage light fades up on MATSUKO and CHIKAKO. A doorbell chimes and the disheveled TADASHI hesitantly enters. MATSUKO rushes him with a hug that he enthusiastically receives.)

MATSUKO

Welcome home.

TADASHI

Home, yeah.

MATSUKO

Took you long enough to get here. What were you waiting for?

CHIKAKO

(emotional, intense, but doesn't move a muscle)

Hi Tadashi.

(TADASHI looks at her, gives her a sweet smile, and opens up his arms. Silently, she walks toward him and he embraces her gently.)

TADASHI

Hi Baby-san.

CHIKAKO

Where in the world have you been? You had me worried to death.

TADASHI

Thought I was dead or something, huh?

CHIKAKO

Now that you mention it, you don't look so good.

TADASHI

Never thought it would be so hard to get from Florida to California.

(studies them, more amused)

We sure look unusual, don't we? I mean, our family--the Brady Bunch were not.

MATSUKO

But go to Polynesia or the West Indies and we look like any typical family full of different colors.

CHIKAKO

And people ask us for directions, too.

TADASHI

Okay. Give it to me straight. Hows the goddess?

MATSUKO

Goddess?

TADASHI

Yeah. That's what I used to call Mom when I was little.

CHIKAKO

She was a goddess, wasn't she....

MATSUKO

Okay, then all mothers are goddesses.

CHIKAKO

No, Mom lit up the room. Once upon a time.

(pause)

Until I decided to have a child on my own.

MATSUKO

That's right. And then that pedestal disintegrated. But that had already happened for me when she exiled Tadashi.

CHIKAKO

She didn't exile Tadashi. There was just too much... stuff.

TADASHI

Especially when Papa got depressed.

MATSUKO

Sick. He got sick. Then he couldn't help much either.

CHIKAKO

Only fifty-three years old and gone to the angels. It was pretty hard on Mom.

TADASHI

Despite that, the goddess never let me down. Is she okay? Really?

CHIKAKO

Growing old just like everybody else, but still beautiful and overly generous.

MATSUKO

Careful. Here comes that pedestal again.

TADASHI

Does she ask about me? Come on, Chikako, you never held anything back from me, even when I teased you-- remember how I used to make you fix my bed for me?

CHIKAKO

And hold up your smelly feet while you watched TV.

TADASHI

I don't remember that.

MATSUKO

(amused)

I do. You made her clip your toenails, too.

CHIKAKO

You remember a lot, Matsuko.

(SATOMI, barely seen, almost as if she is not there, appears up stage and listens to her children's conversation:)

MATSUKO

When it really matters I do. Like the fire. Do you remember that, Tadashi?

TADASHI

Fire? What fire? What are you talking about?

(Upset by his response, SATOMI exits.)

CHIKAKO

Isn't this supposed to be a reunion? You know the standard kind?

MATSUKO

Never mind. But there's nothing standard about us, okay?

CHIKAKO

Maybe I can convince Mom to come say hello.

MATSUKO

Yeah and maybe a pink elephant'll fly by the window.

(The trio is alerted by a door heard opening and shutting. A car starts. TADASHI stands with alarm. The two sisters share a knowing look.)

TADASHI

(as though looking out of a window)

Is that her? Is that the goddess?

(turns to look at his sisters)

MATSUKO

Yes, that's my mother.

TADASHI

Our mother. Mom.

MATSUKO

Yes, sorry. That's what I meant. It's just that you're never here so--

TADASHI

So its like I don't exist.

CHIKAKO

More accurately, its like you're dead.

(quickly)

To her. To Mom.

(a pause then:)

Tadashi, she's leaving because you arrived.

TADASHI

It's just like when I was at the orphanage. She wouldn't come out of the car. All I saw was her glowing like an angel.

MATSUKO

It isn't like that at all, Tadashi. You were seven then; you're nearly fifty now. Your childhood is over. Even if it began later than most, its over now.

(Lights cross-fade to a spotlight. The sisters exit as TADASHI shifts into the light.)

TADASHI

I remember. I remember when my childhood began.

(Lights cross-fade...)

Act 1, Scene 6

Scene Six

(An up stage window is illuminated in morning twilight. SATOMI, in younger persona, enters and stares out of the window. TADASHI, a boy again, is drawn to this light as down stage lights fadeout and the sisters exit.)

SATOMI

Tadashi! Wake up! Mommy wants to show you something.

(TADASHI joins her in this light and looks out of the window as well.)

TADASHI

What is it, Mommy?

SATOMI

Look, Tadashi! It's snow! The first American snow we've ever seen.

TADASHI

Wow! Look at it, Mom! The snowflakes are so big! Everything's so big in America!

SATOMI

Lets eat breakfast and then well go make a snowman. Papa, too.

TADASHI

Mom, is this really my home?

SATOMI

Forever.

TADASHI

You saved me, Mommy. You and Papa are my heroes. And, Mommy, am I clean now? Really clean?

SATOMI

Yes, my son. In body and spirit.

TADASHI

I'm clean!

(spins round and round as he and SATOMI laugh with each other)

Clean, clean, clean!

(Lights cross-fade to the illuminated, center stage moon as SATOMI crosses into it. TADASHI, still the young boy, enters running. The sound of china breaking is heard. He runs right in front of SATOMI, who stops him.)

SATOMI

Ara! Tadashi! This is my good china! How many times must I tell you not to run in the house! Why must you run?

TADASHI

Dunno.

SATOMI

Where are you going in such a hurry?

TADASHI

Mom?

SATOMI

Yes?

TADASHI

Why are you vanilla and why is Papa chocolate?

SATOMI

Tadashi, I am Japanese. My skin is lighter than Papas, but still colored. It is golden, see? Which is really just another shade of brown. And Papas ancestors are African and Native American, who are both dark.

TADASHI

Am I Japanese?

SATOMI

Yes and no.

TADASHI

Am I colored?

SATOMI

You are both, Tadashi, okay? You have two races and two cultures. And too many questions!

TADASHI

And no friends. The colored kids won't play with me because they said I'm not one of them. They call me gook. And the white kids call me nigger and the Mexican kids call me flip.

SATOMI

Poor Tadashi. Sometimes hard to make friends in new country. Mommy know. But I have easier time of it. They just call me Jap. Don't worry. You're happy boy with lots of energy and you aren't afraid of anything, so you'll find way to make friends. Come, Tadashi. I make you miso soup and makizushi. Eat.

(She exits as TADASHI starts to dance as late 1950s soul music. His dancing and the music stop abruptly when SATOMI rushes in reprimandingly.)

SATOMI

Tadashi!

TADASHI

Yes, Mom?

SATOMI

Did you steal money from my purse? Did you take earrings out of my jewelry box? Did you take steaks out of freezer?

TADASHI

Mom! I have two new friends! I think they really like me. Can they come over one day?

SATOMI

Not in the house. Play in the yard. Americans don't want to take their shoes off in the house.

(not listening, he runs out excitedly)

Don't run in the house! Noisy boy! Girls are so much easier!

(She is about to exit, but TADASHI reenters, defeated, sad, his mouth bleeding.)

SATOMI

(contd.)

What have you done now? Oh my goodness!

(He needs a hug and moves toward her for one, but she doesn't know how to give one. Although wanting to help, she backs away.)

TADASHI

Mom, some boys beat me up.

SATOMI

Okay, just sit there. I'll get a towel to clean you up.

TADASHI

(moves in for another hug, she moves away)

Mommy. Mommy.

SATOMI

Why did your friends do this to you?

TADASHI

I told them I couldn't give them any more money. Or steaks or earrings either.

SATOMI

(loses her temper)

How annoying! How could you give our things to useless strangers who just take advantage of you because you're different? They made you a little slave, just like Mama-chamain that shabby Shinagawa orphanage. What you going todo? Dance all your life to try to make people love you?

TADASHI

But Mommy...

(he begins to cry)

SATOMI

Stop crying. Boys don't cry.

(VINCENT enters the light in military dress uniform and kisses SATOMI on the cheek, who immediately softens. She bows to him. The moment he notices that TADASHI'S bleeding, he wraps the boy in his arms.)

VINCENT

Whats this? What happened to my little soldier?

TADASHI

Papa, my friends beat me up and called me gook and nigger.

VINCENT

I'm sorry, son. I'm embarrassed as a citizen for such badly bred American children.

(hugs him hard)

There, does that make you feel a little bit better?

(uses his handkerchief to wipe the wound)

Okay. Go wash your face and then I'll take you down to the Peter Pan store for lemon ice cream.

(Elated, TADASHI skips away, but then turns back curiously to listen clandestinely. VINCENT turns to SATOMI and hands her the handkerchief.)

SATOMI

You give him handkerchief, you think of lemon ice cream. Me? I am too busy saying 'pick up dirty socks,' 'clean up your room' to be the kind of mother Tadashi really needs.

VINCENT

(embraces her)

Now come on, Baby-san. Who tells him all those wonderful Japanese fairy tales about boy heroes? Who makes sukiyaki for him? Who folds his underwear?

SATOMI

But Tadashi needs so much more than that.

VINCENT

And you can give it. You're a natural-born nurturer, Baby-san. You know that?

(He kisses her neck and they share a physical closeness: an embrace, a caress of the shoulders, etc.)

SATOMI

It's easy to love you, Vincent. But, with Tadashi, its always a test: how much can I take, what can I overlook...

VINCENT

Just be your own sweet self, Baby-san. Don't try so hard to discipline the boy. Whats discipline without twice as much love?

SATOMI

Maybe hes too different from us. We don't know the boys history, his blood.

VINCENT

This isn't about what the boys made of. This is about what he can be, with our help.

SATOMI

I finish laundry, hang rest of clothes so they dry before sun go down.

VINCENT

Are you listening to me, Satomi?

SATOMI

Yes, but I am only human, Vincent. Please remember that.

VINCENT

Didn't you ever love him, Satomi?

(Lights shift to a surreal mode as TADASHI approaches SATOMI with hope. He reaches out to touch her, but without making contact.)

SATOMI

Love? Tadashi?

(As VINCENT, SATOMI exit in darkness, the lights shift to the portal which TADASHI enters.)

TADASHI

You did, Mom. You truly did love me. Don't you remember?

(Lights shift dramatically, smashing upon THE CONFUSER as the Jolly Japanese Woman and the cowering TADASHI in the tableau in which they were last seen.)

THE CONFUSER

Lie down you worthless monkey. Lie down on your back as filthy and mangy as the day I found you.

(forces him onto his back and squats over him)

(Immediately, SATOMI enters, resplendent in an elegant beige silk suit of the 1950s era and a sophisticated hat with netting, gloves. THE CONFUSER rises rapidly as TADASHI tries to recover from the ordeal. He coughs, splutters, sitting on bent knee, and then vomits. He lifts his head to wipe his mouth, his gaze falls upon her and he is thunderstruck.)

THE CONFUSER

(contd.)

Hello, miss! Are you interested in this little boy here? Hes a real good dancer. Would you like a little sample?

SATOMI

(ignoring her)

Tadashi? Tadashi Kawada?

TADASHI

Goddess?

SATOMI

I'm Mrs. Lane, Tadashi. Are you all right?

TADASHI

(looks at THE CONFUSER in fear)

Yes. But I thought you and Papa left to go to America.

SATOMI

... I looked back and saw you.

THE CONFUSER

You mean you saw him dancing? That's what hes always doing.

SATOMI

What kind of dancing was that, Tadashi?

(SATOMI approaches him, without thought to her clothing.)

THE CONFUSER

Mrs. Lane! The boys covered in vomit. Don't get your lovely clothes dirty!

(SATOMI helps TADASHI stand. His legs are wobbly. She smells around his face, examines his neck and arms. She is disturbed by what she sees.)

THE CONFUSER

(contd.)

Careful, Mrs. Lane! Hes very unstable, prone to wild fit sat any--

SATOMI

Tadashi? Would you like to show me your room? I'd like to see your room.

THE CONFUSER

Not possible! The rooms are being cleaned today!

SATOMI

Mama-chama, Tadashi needs to be cleaned up. I'm going to clean him up. Lets go, Tadashi.

(A small pin of light appears down stage as TADASHI takes a step toward it. THECONFUSER moves to block his progress, but SATOMI cuts her a threatening glance.)

THE CONFUSER

Hes a liar! Hes got a good imagination and he knows how to use it.

(TADASHI points to the light with fear. SATOMI walks to it and stands in it, the pin illuminating her face. TADASHI runs and stands behind her to avoid the attempt by THE CONFUSER to pull him aside. Sounds of scurrying insects are heard.)

SATOMI

So you're certain this little broom closet is your room.

THE CONFUSER

That's not his room! He only plays in there! You know how boys are! Like mice running everywhere!

TADASHI

(quietly)

I sleep on the top shelf cause not so many bugs crawl around up there at night.

SATOMI

(indignation for the situation, compassion for him)

I see. Do the other children have rooms like yours?

TADASHI

No.

THE CONFUSER

(simultaneously with TADASHI'S last line)

Yes!

TADASHI

The other children, they're Japanese. They sleep in one room all together with Mama-chama.

THE CONFUSER

He sleeps in there, too! Right beside me! My favorite son!

SATOMI

And these marks on your neck and arms. Are these from climbing around in your room?

TADASHI

Oh no. It's from the cockroaches biting--

THE CONFUSER

Cockroaches? Crickets! Lucky crickets! ! !

SATOMI

My husband tells me you like chocolate.

(takes out a candy bar)

Here. This is for you.

TADASHI

(takes it reluctantly, afraid of THE CONFUSER)

Thank you.

SATOMI

My husband told me you can't eat the candy right away, that Mama-chama stores it for you until after you eat your dinner. Why don't you show me where she stores your candy and meat. Where does it all go, Tadashi?

THE CONFUSER

I love you, boy-san! Come to Mama-chama!

(The pin of light enlarges and TADASHI steps into it with SATOMI. Sounds of insects fade.)

TADASHI

She keeps it all here.

SATOMI

This is a really big closet. Much bigger than your room.

TADASHI

Yeah. I asked Mama-chama if I could have this for my room, but she said she needed a big closet to store all the stuff that Sgt. Lane brought.

THE CONFUSER

(a threat)

Liiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiar.

SATOMI

But surely the closet must be empty sometime.

TADASHI

When the tattooed men in dark glasses come. Then its empty until Sgt. Lane brings more stuff.

SATOMI

So you never eat what he brings you?

TADASHI

Mama-chama says she has to give it to the men in dark glasses or they'll come in the middle of the night and chop me into a whole bunch of pieces.

THE CONFUSER

(comes to the edge of the light)

Listen, Princess.

TADASHI

(correcting her)

Goddess.

THE CONFUSER

Yankee-lover! This is my orphanage and you're trespassing. Get the hell outta here. Aren't you in the wrong country?

SATOMI

You're pandering this boy so you can get staple goods from soft-hearted Americans like my husband, and then you're selling those goods on the black market. And I doubt if a single yen of that money is used to feed and clothe these children.

THE CONFUSER

Nobody gives a damn about these bastards and especially not this mongrel. Including you. Afraid his mother was a prostitute? An untouchable? Maybe not even Japanese?

(grabs TADASHI and throws him behind her)

You're gonna get it now.

TADASHI

(crying)

No, please.

THE CONFUSER

Shut up!

(THE CONFUSER slaps TADASHI across the face. SATOMI approaches her and stands eye-to-eye with her.)

SATOMI

Tadashi, stand up.

(But he seems finally to be completely broken.)

SATOMI

(contd.)

Stand up.

(he doesn't move)

You have to save yourself, Tadashi. I'll help you, but you have to stand up.

(Slowly, although feebly, he stands.)

SATOMI

(contd.)

Now look her in the eye and tell her good-bye.

TADASHI

What?

SATOMI

Tell this... kind lady... good-bye.

THE CONFUSER

Over my dead — -

SATOMI

You're speaking out of turn, Mama-chama.

TADASHI

(as the realization sinks in, his gaze at SATOMI, then his firm gaze at THE CONFUSER)

Good-bye.

THE CONFUSER

Wait a minute!

SATOMI

Now turn around and go to the car. Papas waiting for you.

TADASHI

But I'm so dirty.

SATOMI

Don't worry about that. Everything will be all right.

(Still hardly able to believe it, TADASHI takes one last long look at THE CONFUSER and runs out, fast.)

THE CONFUSER

You can't just kidnap him like that. His real mother called today! She's coming to get him! She wants him back! He's my prize son, my rainbow across the Pacific!

SATOMI

Mama-chama, I'm embarrassed as a citizen to meet Japanese like you. I'm reporting you to the authorities. By tomorrow, you'll be in jail and these children will be farmed out to real orphanages.

THE CONFUSER

You think that helps somebody like Tadashi? Hes half black and seven years old now. Nobody'll want him.

SATOMI

Don't talk about my son like that. Now get out of my way.

(SATOMI turns on her heels and exits in same direction as TADASHI as THE CONFUSER exits angrily in opposite direction. Lights fade. End of ACT I.)

Act 2

Act 2, Scene 1: Scene 7

ACT II Scene Seven

(Semi-darkness fades in as TADASHI enters and crosses to center stage. Behind him stands SATOMI. THE DAZZLER stands behind her, back-to-back. As TADASHI speaks, the women revolve until THE DAZZLER faces forward.)

TADASHI

Memory's a funny thing, isn't it? Sometimes its so funny it hurts.

(Lights fade out on THE DAZZLER and SATOMI as they exit; lights fade up on CHIKAKO and MATSUKO around TADASHI.)

CHIKAKO

I remember getting in the Pontiac with Mom and Papa and Matsuko and driving to Topeka to visit you at reform school. When you send your son to a place like that just for giving away a few steaks and stealing your pocket change, that's called giving up, which mothers simply aren't allowed to do, no matter what.

TADASHI

And that first Christmas. I wrote Mom and Papa, and asked you all to come see me. I got dressed up and waited, but nobody ever came.

MATSUKO

I don't remember that.

CHIKAKO

I'm sorry. I never knew about it.

TADASHI

It's okay. I figured the letter probably never arrived. Story of my life. But you two, you survived. I saw you on TV, on some talk show, Baby-san.

CHIKAKO

Oh yes. That excursion into popular culture. I'm a poster child for the multiracial movement. Me and Tiger Woods.

MATSUKO

But you have to do it because it helps the hapa cause.

TADASHI

Whats a hapa?

CHIKAKO

That's us. It's from the Hawaiian language. It means someone who's part Asian.

TADASHI

Hapa.

(liking the feel of it)

Hapa. Hapa, hapa, hapa! Yeah! So half-half is finally whole-whole.

MATSUKO

You better believe it. That's the prescription. So can you get on with your life now?

TADASHI

Wheres the goddess? She doesn't want to see me? Again?

MATSUKO

Tadashi, she doesn't forget. Anything.

CHIKAKO

Nobody remembers everything. And what we do remember we remember in different ways and at different times.

(The sisters exit and their lights fade. Spotlight on TADASHI as he faces the audience.)

TADASHI

(stage whisper)

Memory is definitely a funny thing.

(a pause, then:)

You try to go back and its like falling into a prism, a prism of memory. Everything's distorted, and you don't know what's real or merely a reflection.

(A down stage spotlight fades up into which SATOMI crosses; she assumes a younger persona. She is aglow with brilliance and beauty. TADASHI'S attention is riveted upon her.)

SATOMI

Tadashi, I know you resent being brought here to live in States because everything so black and white. Like it or not, your mother was Japanese and your father was black--African American, whatever I supposed to say. But don't take it out on me and Papa. We try to do best we can for you. You mixed blood, just like Matsuko and Chikako. Is that so bad? Come here. Mama make you sukiyaki. Sit down and eat with Mama.

(Enter THE CONFUSER as the Jolly Japanese Woman. She stands in the shadow of SATOMI'S light and mouths the words that SATOMI speaks:)

SATOMI

(contd.)

(frustration alters the glow)

Tadashi, did you steal my charge card? Someone bought girl's nightgown and perfume on my card and I can't find it. Did you steal it, Tadashi?

(TADASHI looks downward. Then THE DAZZLER as luminescent moon enters and stands in the shadow of SATOMI'S light. She speaks, and THE CONFUSER and SATOMI mouth her words:)

THE DAZZLER

Is that it, Tadashi? They've stolen you in bits and pieces because you're not black enough, not Japanese enough, not American enough? You want to find your real mother and seek revenge? You could end up dead — or worse. When the spirit is murdered, what is left?

(Exit CONFUSER and DAZZLER. Lights cross-fade to a spotlight on SATOMI as CHIKAKO enters in younger persona. SATOMI looks downward at CHIKAKO'S legs as though talking to a small child.)

CHIKAKO

Mother?

SATOMI

Chikako-chan, look! Look at the dinner table! You want to see something funny?

(as SATOMI indicates, CHIKAKO follows her gaze)

How many people do you see sitting at the table?

CHIKAKO

(counts)

I see you and Papa on one side.

SATOMI

Yes?

CHIKAKO

And Matsuko and me on the other.

SATOMI

You see four, right? Me, too.

(Disturbed, CHIKAKO nods.)

SATOMI

(contd.)

But there are five people. Really. Five.

(moves to gain a different perspective)

You stand over here and you can see Tadashi, too.

(noting CHIKAKOS position across the stage)

But you stand over there and Tadashi disappears. Isn't that funny? Stand over there. It's easier!

(Disappointed, CHIKAKO turns away from SATOMI as lights cross-fade to four blue spotlights into which TADASHI, SATOMI, CHIKAKO, and MATSUKO step.)

SATOMI

Children, your report cards came today.

TADASHI

Congratulations, Mom.

SATOMI

Chikako, Matsuko, you got As in almost every subject. But, Chikako, you got bad grade in science class! A-.

CHIKAKO

But in class they kill mice, Mom.

SATOMI

Look in kitchen cabinet. I kill mice, too. With hunks cheese. They like that. Tadashi, you got mostly Cs.

TADASHI

(proudly)

So I'm average. Whats so bad about being average?

SATOMI

You can't be Japanese and black in America and just be average.

MATSUKO

He has a hard time concentrating in school, Mother.

SATOMI

He can hardly concentrate in life ever since he became teenager. He didn't fix his bed again today--and don't you dare fix it for him, Chikako! You can't follow him around his whole life long and fix things that he just lets go.

CHIKAKO

Sometimes I have a hard time, too, Mother.

SATOMI

I had B-29 bomb falling around my head from time I was fourteen, so don't tell me about hard time when you live in nice, quiet town and go to school a block away.

MATSUKO, CHIKAKO, TADASHI

(as a round in order of their names as noted, with each successive voice beginning at SATOMI'S utterance of head)

I've had bombs falling around my head since I was born, so don't tell me about hard times....

SATOMI

They saw us. They did. They knew we were kids, but they shot at us anyway.

TADASHI

You used to be a goddess, Mother. Americas made you a comanchera.

SATOMI

What mean this comanchera?

MATSUKO

You see, Mom, were different.

CHIKAKO

When you mix red and blue, you get violet. It's easy when you're painting on paper, but not so easy when you're painting pigment.

SATOMI

What are you talking about? Nihongo de hanashite kudasai.

CHIKAKO, TADASHI, MATSUKO

(a whisper)

Violet.

CHIKAKO

Murasaki-iro, Okaasan.

TADASHI

It means I have to make me up as I go along because I don't fit in to what's already there.

CHIKAKO

No, we don't have to imagine ourselves. We just ARE.

MATSUKO

It means being more real than what people state as being real.

(Spotlights fade out on MATSUKO and SATOMI, who exit. The sound of cicadas buzzing and other night sounds emerge.)

TADASHI

(whisper)

Chikako? Wake up! I think she's gonna try to kill me.

CHIKAKO

Who?

TADASHI

The goddess.

CHIKAKO

She couldn't kill anybody.

TADASHI

Did you check the kitchen cabinet? I saw him. His head under a steel bar, cheese still in his mouth.

CHIKAKO

... yes... I saw him.

TADASHI

He ate her rice, the rice that was meant for her children. And so... she killed him.

(Black-out on spotlights, cease night sounds. VINCENT enters a down stage spotlight. He wears casual clothes and stares out into nothingness. He is inebriated, but in control. His depression is intense. TADASHI enters the light.)

TADASHI

Papa?

VINCENT

Yes son?

TADASHI

Does Mommy love me?

VINCENT

Of course son.

TADASHI

Are you all right, Papa? You look sad.

VINCENT

I'm just fine, son. This is the most beautiful, bravest country in the world. How could anyone who lives here be sad?

TADASHI

Papa? Will you read with me?

VINCENT

Look at that orange sunset, Tadashi, like fire. My mother used to say it was that color because the angels were baking cookies. One day, I'm gonna go up there and help them.

TADASHI

All the way up there? I bet that's farther than Japan. Papa, what's that? Whats that in your pocket? Is that iced tea? Can I have a drink, please?

VINCENT

You don't want to drink that, son. It doesn't taste very good.

TADASHI

Then why are you drinking it?

VINCENT

(a pause, then)

Sometimes I can't sleep at night. I have bad dreams.

TADASHI

Really? Me, too, Papa! Demons come, right?

VINCENT

Yes, son. Demons.

TADASHI

What do yours look like? Do they look like Mama-chama?

VINCENT

(slightly amused)

No, son.

(then sobering)

Mine look like... well, they look like me.

TADASHI

Like you? But, Papa, you're not a demon. You're an angel.

VINCENT

I fought in the Pacific theater of war, Tadashi.

TADASHI

A theater?

VINCENT

Isn't it funny that they talk about war like that? Theaters war. I was on Guam. In the jungle, I came eye-to-eye with a young Japanese soldier. Maybe seventeen years old.

TADASHI

Wow! What did you guys talk about?

VINCENT

(with difficulty)

I didn't talk to him, son. I shot him.

TADASHI

What? You, Papa? Not you!

VINCENT

Yup. I killed people for my country and then I came home and my country called me nigger. *Another* theater of war. Tadashi, take care of Mama and the girls for me, okay?

TADASHI

But where are you going?

VINCENT

You be my little soldier always.

TADASHI

But I don't want to have to kill anybody, Papa.

VINCENT

Tadashi, Papa needs to sleep now.

TADASHI

Papa? What kind of cookies are the angels baking up there?

VINCENT

Sugar cookies, son. Now give me some Tadashi sugar. They'll make some extra-special cookies outta that.

(TADASHI gives him a kiss on the cheek and then hugs him hard. Lights shift as VINCENT exits. SATOMI enters in a spotlight and TADASHI grows even smaller beside her.)

SATOMI

Okay, Tadashi, everything packed? I bought you nice new clothes for your little... vacation. Papa can't come to say good-bye because hes in hospital. Asthma. From stress.

(meaning the opposite)

Its... not your fault.

(a pause)

Tadashi, you listen to everything counselors tell you, okay?

(THE DAZZLER and THE CONFUSER enter and stand in SATOMI'S shadow. They mouth SATOMI'S words:)

SATOMI

(contd.)

You can't help way you are. You were born of war and wars still beating on you, I guess. That's what Chikako say anyway. Now don't cry.

(THE DAZZLER looks sad. She stops mouthing the words and looks downward. THE CONFUSER continues to mouth SATOMI'S words:)

SATOMI

(contd.)

This not jail. Just reform school. Maybe this what you been waiting for. The chance to change. The war has to stop, Tadashi. It's not my fault your mother left you.

(With a look of guilt, THE DAZZLER bows her head with great deference.)

SATOMI

(contd.)

I didn't leave you. I'm not leaving you now either. I'm not zoo, okay? I don't know how to take care of wild animal. I didn't have anything to do with making you wild. You came that way and I tried to tame you. It's not jail. It's reform school.

(Lights tighten on TADASHI.)

TADASHI

Mom?

SATOMI & THE DAZZLER

(reverberating O. S. voices from the darkness)

What now, Tadashi?

TADASHI

Do I really have to go?

SATOMI & THE DAZZLER & THE CONFUSER

(reverberating O. S. voices from the darkness)

Get in the car, Tadashi.

THE CONFUSER

(O. S.)

Now.

TADASHI

(defeated)

Yes ma'am.

(Black-out. Lights fade up on MATSUKO, TADASHI, and CHIKAKO in present-day, as we last saw them. The three siblings share a tense glance.)

MATSUKO

Go get her, Chikako.

CHIKAKO

Me?

MATSUKO

She likes you better.

CHIKAKO

Right.

MATSUKO

Everybody loves a rebel.

CHIKAKO

That's your American side speaking. All right. If I'm not back in five minutes, send back-up.

(Lights cross-fade from down stage to a spotlight as MATSUKO and TADASHI exit, and CHIKAKO enters the spotlight. She looks straight ahead.)

CHIKAKO

(contd.)

Okaasan? Mom? Mom, its time.

(SATOMI appears on the edge of the light, looking downward.)

SATOMI

Do you need anything at Marukai Market? I go now.

CHIKAKO

You just came home, Mom.

SATOMI

And I go again. I go if I want to.

CHIKAKO

Okay. You're right. But, Mom, just come and say hello. That's all you have to do.

SATOMI

So hes here. She let him in. Did he steal anything yet?

CHIKAKO

Mom.

SATOMI

He never nice to me after he became teenager. He stole and stole, and never gave anything back. I am sorry, Chikako, but whatever he once was to me die long time ago.

CHIKAKO

Mom, you haven't seen him since he first left home over thirty years ago. Haven't you changed in thirty years? Haven't I?

(a pause)

He called you goddess.

SATOMI

Goddess? Nani, goddess? Oh, hai, hai, hai. He used to call me that.

CHIKAKO

Are you still a goddess?

(SATOMI looks away)

Tadashi's not a testosterone-driven teenager anymore, Mother.

SATOMI

It's not just that. How can you forgive him so easily? Remember how sick you were? You missed two weeks of school.

CHIKAKO

But Tadashi had nothing to do with that.

SATOMI

(exasperated)

Hes not even your real brother.

CHIKAKO

Doesn't that depend on how you define real?

SATOMI

I never want to adopt Tadashi. I make Papa say sorry before he die.

CHIKAKO

And is there anything that you're going to have to be sorry for when you move on from this life?

SATOMI

(upset)

The day he left he cursed me. When you curse a woman, you lose her.

CHIKAKO

You're the only mother hes got.

SATOMI

No. I was just the last one. That's all. The last one. I did everything for Tadashi, but he no listen to me.

(SATOMI enters the portal. Lights cross-fade, fading up on TADASHI center stage on his knees, quivering, as THE DAZZLER and THE CONFUSER enter the portal. The three mother figures are a tier in the portal: THE CONFUSER down stage of SATOMI in the center, and THE DAZZLER with arms outstretched up stage of SATOMI.)

THE DAZZLER & THE CONFUSER

(her line blending in with SATOMI'S last one)

Listen to me!

TADASHI

No.

THE DAZZLER

Listen to me.

TADASHI

(raises his head a little, more resolved)

No.

SATOMI

Listen to me.

TADASHI

(raises his head even more and looks around, never sets eyes on any of the three)

No.

(As SATOMI speaks, THE DAZZLER and THECONFUSER mouth her words in unison:)

SATOMI

I know what comanchera means now. You think America has made me a warrior? A soldier?

SATOMI, THE DAZZLER, & THE CONFUSER

(as a round)

I was your mother first.

TADASHI

Don't ruin it now. I want to remember you loving your china tea cups better than you loved your own son. The girls made the grade. You looked at them and saw the best of east and west. But you looked at me and saw a nigger. Go ahead and say it. When those kids called me nigger, you were singing with them, too, weren't you, goddess?

(THE DAZZLER and SATOMI mouth THECONFUSERS speeches:)

THE CONFUSER

Because you act like a nigger. And you don't have to be black to be a nigger.

TADASHI

I know. Because you're a nigger, too.

THE CONFUSER

You go. Go die. Fire will follow you all your life. What do you know? What have you ever known?

(THE CONFUSER and THE DAZZLER fall into SATOMI'S shadow as she steps forward and faces TADASHI.)

SATOMI

When Papa died, he apologized for you.

TADASHI

Papa loved me.

SATOMI

Yes, but, Tadashi, love gets tired. So you go. You go start your life so I can have mine back.

TADASHI

Good-bye, Mom. And don't think I wouldn't have chosen the orphanage over America. I just might've. I'd rather know I wasn't free from the get-go, than to think I was and learn the hard way that it was just a myth.

Lots of myths in America. Your country.

SATOMI

It's not my country. I didn't ask to come here.

TADASHI

But you could've said no. It's more your country than it'll ever be mine because it looks at you, sees an immigrant, and gives you a break sometimes. But it looks at me and sees an American, a nigger, a spic, a gook; it looks at me never understanding that I can't speak the language either.

SATOMI

But you speak English.

TADASHI

Holy myopia. I don't mean words. I mean the language of culture, the language of the heart, mind, soul. I'm a citizen of the world, a nomad, waiting, waiting, waiting. I cannot speak the language. I wish I could. I always wanted to be a piece of your china, Goddess.

SATOMI

If I could have found your mother and asked her to love you from your first breath and then every day as every child deserves...

TADASHI

Just remember, Goddess. People are better than you think they are.

(SATOMI, SHAPESHIFTERS exit. Lights shift. TADASHI and CHIKAKO, in younger personas, come far down stage and speak as if trying not to be overheard.)

CHIKAKO

What do you mean you're going? You mean like leaving?

TADASHI

(false bravado)

Yeah. I'm shaking this shit-hole, Princess.

CHIKAKO

You mean you're running away? Again?

TADASHI

I'm grown now; I'm eighteen. I don't need to run. Just tell the goddess that I've returned to the wild. She'll applaud, with that kind of half-smile Japanese always got on their lips. I don't know what you're so worried about anyway, Chikako. Life isn't worth a dime, okay? We want to pretend that it's precious, but it isn't. It's tenuous. Fleeting as an enema. Dwell on it and it'll kill you. Who cares what happens to me? Who cares what

happens to you? You're still alive. You got your straight As, your Polynesian Barbie Doll looks, your spelling bee blue ribbon. But the world'll suck out your heart, too, Baby-san. So live fast. Don't look back. Tomorrow, you could be on a slab at the morgue.

CHIKAKO

Thank you for that enlightening forecast. I'll be okay.

TADASHI

You'll never be okay. You wanna know why? Because you were born of war and the wars still inside of you.

CHIKAKO

Not me. That's you. You.

TADASHI

And its never going to stop, Chikako, so just let it go.

CHIKAKO

It's because of Papa, right? You're leaving because he died?

(A blue light fades up on the portal. VINCENT appears in it wearing a hospital gown. TADASHI stares at him as CHIKAKO exits. TADASHI approaches VINCENT.)

TADASHI

You gotta lotta nerve showing up here again after I already made my grand exit. I left the Goddess, Pops. Left her right after you did. Left before she could say I was too old to be living at home.

VINCENT

I'm not leaving her, son. And I'm not leaving you. I'm gonna be up there making cookies, sending em to you everyday.

TADASHI

You did leave me. You left me at reform school. Now I finally get out of that place and here you are leaving me again. I don't want any cookies. I want you.

VINCENT

I'm tired, son. My wars finally over. Remember you promised to take care of Mama and the girls.

TADASHI

And what did you promise me?

VINCENT

I know, son. I made a lot of promises to all of you that I can't keep. A few to myself, too.

TADASHI

Hug me, Papa.

VINCENT

Cant son. I'm just wind and spirit now.

TADASHI

Was it the war? Is that why you drank, Papa?

VINCENT

I drank so I could live in my country and still love my country. Tadashi, listen. You're never going to find what you're looking for. Because its not in the pine trees or the moon or a bottle. It's inside of you. That's where you have to go. Don't stay away too long, okay? Your mother needs you.

TADASHI

Why couldn't you live, Papa?

VINCENT

I did. For a time. Now its your turn.

(TADASHI adjusts the back of VINCENT'S gown and then embraces him, although their bodies never make contact. VINCENT prepares to enter the sanctuary of the Portal.)

TADASHI

Papa! Wait! Did you? Did you apologize to Mom for adopting me?

VINCENT

Maybe she saw it that way. I told her I was sorry for not being able to help enough with you. You see, son, I never meant to bring her all the way to a foreign country and then leave her here to be strong all by herself. Trouble is, too often it was foreign to me, too.

(VINCENT, prepared for eternity, enters the portal. TADASHI feels the urge to accompany him, but does not, which only frustrates TADASHI more. Lights cross fade...)

Act 2, Scene 2: Scene 8

Scene Eight

(Lights fade up on MATSUKO and TADASHI. CHIKAKO enters.)

MATSUKO

Well?

CHIKAKO

How many ways can a Japanese woman say no? Sorry, Tadashi.

TADASHI

Beautiful. Look, its been great seeing you, but I've really got to get back home.

CHIKAKO

And wheres that?

TADASHI

None of your business, princess.

CHIKAKO

Okay. Remind me of that next time I have the urge to save you.

TADASHI

No. Next time, don't try to find me, you hear?

MATSUKO

We didn't try to find you this time, Tadashi. You found us. It just wasn't exactly what you were looking for, I guess. But I don't think you're ever really going to find what you're looking for until you look at yourself.

TADASHI

Well thank you very much for the pop-psychology. How much do I owe you? Ten cents?

MATSUKO

Good-bye, Tadashi.

TADASHI

That's my line.

CHIKAKO

No. Your line is Good-bye Matsuko, good-bye Chikako. You don't say good-bye to yourself.

(TADASHI ponders this for a moment; maybe one can and does. He is about to leave when SATOMI suddenly appears. TADASHI'S countenance mutates into that of a little boy who just got what he wanted for Christmas.)

TADASHI

Mom. Hi.

SATOMI

Hello.

TADASHI

You--you haven't changed a bit.

SATOMI

No, no. I grow old.

TADASHI

But you don't have any wrinkles.

SATOMI

Ancient Japanese secret.

(He approaches her to hug her, but she doesn't know how and retreats. But this time he hugs her anyway. She is motionless in the embrace, smiling and nodding mostly out of nerves and then staring at the top of his head.)

SATOMI

You losing your hair.

TADASHI

(amused)

Thanks, Mom. That's the first thing you want to tell me after all this time.

SATOMI

Look like a melon.

TADASHI

Mom, you look beautiful.

(getting choked up)

I-I thought you were... dead... But here you are. The goddess lives.

SATOMI

Tadashi, I am not goddess. I never was goddess.

TADASHI

Oh yes you were. You saved me. Don't you remember?

SATOMI

(firmly)

No. No I didn't.

(a pause then:)

Why you come here after all these years? You can't come and go as you please like child. You always that way when you little boy, running into the kitchen, running out into the yard, breaking this, breaking that. Mendokusai, ne.

TADASHI

Whats that mean?

SATOMI

Japanese your first language and you don't remember? Shame, ne.

CHIKAKO

It means bothersome.

MATSUKO

With an element of keen irritation.

TADASHI

I see.

(a pause then:)

Don't you remember some of the times when I was good?

SATOMI

(thinks hard)

Lets see. You take sisters trick-or-treating for Halloween. Lady tell them to dance if they want candy and they cry. So you dance for them.

TADASHI

I remember! I did the Four Corners and the lady gave them candy.

CHIKAKO

You danced so I could have a piece of candy? Oh god. How will I ever live it down.

TADASHI

It's okay. That stranger had no business asking you to dance for your supper.

SATOMI

Did you get U. S. citizenship yet?

TADASHI

Uh, no. I'm still a citizen of nowhere.

CHIKAKO

Or maybe of everywhere.

SATOMI

You get citizenship before they throw you out of country, *ne*? Maybe they send you to third-world nation because they think you come from there. You get shipped off to Colombia, don't call me.

(a quick pause, then:)

You marry yet?

TADASHI

No, I--

SATOMI

Girlfriend? Boyfriend?

TADASHI

I had a girlfriend--Magdalena--but she left me.

SATOMI

You have job?

TADASHI

Rest easy, Mom. I'm a salesman for an international shipping company. It allows me to travel, which is perfect because you know I don't like to stay in one place too long.

SATOMI

I see. And if I call up this job of yours, will your boss tell me you are hard worker, good man?

TADASHI

Yes.

SATOMI

You pay bills on time?

TADASHI

Yes, Mom.

SATOMI

You never cheat, no lie, no cause trouble?

CHIKAKO

What is this? The Japanese Inquisition?

TADASHI

I've changed, Mom. Honest.

SATOMI

So desu ka. So then you come home to finally remember and say you sorry?

CHIKAKO

Mother, let it go.

MATSUKO

No. Not this time.

SATOMI

Nobody's leaving this room until everybody remembers the one thing that nearly destroyed us. You, too, Chikako. Wallpaper in Chikako's bedroom used to be pink with roses. Remember that? But wallpaper cost too much. After the fire, Papa paint room peach. Soft color to make Chikako feel better.

TADASHI

The flowers were roses?

SATOMI

Of course they were roses! How annoying! If you remember that, then you remember everything else, too. I remember finding my father hanging from ceiling of our country home. I remember my mother dying in my arms, me holding her like baby. I remember every second of the war. You better remember, too, Tadashi. There isn't much time left.

TADASHI

But Mom--

SATOMI

Tadashi, you're a natural disaster. All I ever wanted was for you to be a man.

(TADASHI looks at CHIKAKO for support, but, emotional herself, she turns away. Lights tighten to a pin light on TADASHI'S face as he struggles to remember and a clock ticks loudly. On the edges of the darkness, SATOMI emerges, then THE CONFUSER, and then THEDAZZLER.)

SATOMI, SHAPE-SHIFTER CONFUSER, & THE DAZZLER

(in a round, stage whispers, with microphone)

Lets go back, Tadashi.

SATOMI

Lets go, Tadashi.

THE CONFUSER

Lets go all the way back, boy-san.

THE DAZZLER

You have to go back, my son.

THE CONFUSER

Or you're coming home with me, for good.

SATOMI, THE CONFUSER, & THE DAZZLER

(in a round, stage whispers)

It's eight o'clock. You watch your sisters. Keep them close. Guard them well. Let no harm come to them.

(TADASHI tries to run from the light, but SATOMI holds up a warning hand, THEDAZZLER bows to him as if in prayer, and THE CONFUSER menacingly takes a step towards him. Trapped, TADASHI stares outward from the light. [Microphone use for mother sends.]

SATOMI

Go back,

THE DAZZLER

My son,

THE CONFUSER

Watch your step.

(an ominous laugh)

(The women exit as a large blue spotlight fades up down stage simultaneously with the blasting of an alarm, at first that of an exaggeratedly loud alarm clock and then a fire alarm. TADASHI'S face spotlight goes out as he is startled by the alarm. He rushes to the blue light and sits in it as TV lights flicker on a wall, and alarms abruptly cease. As he watches the TV lights, he assumes a younger persona. CHIKAKO, in younger persona, enters.)

TADASHI

Sit down, I can't see the TV. No, sit here and hold up my feet.

CHIKAKO

But they stink like your sneakers.

TADASHI

Sit down and hold them up I said. Now.

(She does.)

TADASHI

(contd.)

Baby-san, before Mom and Pop went out, I got into trouble.

CHIKAKO

Y-y-you did?

TADASHI

Cheekaaaakooo, why did you tell Mom that I made you fix my bed again?

CHIKAKO

B-b-because this time it was dirty. You made shi-shi in your bed.

TADASHI

Liar. Shut up.

CHIKAKO

I'm not going to fix your bed anymore.

TADASHI

Oh yes you are you little monkey.

CHIKAKO

Don't call me a monkey!

TADASHI

Monkey, monkey, monkey girl!

(Defiantly, she stands, causing him to topple over. Out of fear, she tries to suppress her amusement, but it is difficult.)

TADASHI

(contd.)

Yeah, I'm like Daruma, baby! Six times down, seven times up! Lets see if monkey girl-san can get back up like me.

(He pushes her and she recovers. He pushes her down and she gets up.)

TADASHI

(contd.)

Stupid. Don't you know there's times you just need to shut up and go to your closet? You're not always supposed to fight back. Think you're pretty special, huh. Mommy's little shadow, Mommy's little princess. Go to your room, rice ball.

CHIKAKO

Fine. I'll go and read.

TADASHI

What? Uh-uh. You go to your room and sit in the dark. No reading, no lights, or you're going to get it.

CHIKAKO

Tadashi, please. I'll be quiet. I'll fix your bed tomorrow, too. Every day. I promise.

TADASHI

Too late, Monkey Girl. Go to your room.

(A small pin of red light fades up and he points to it. Out of fear, she goes to the light that widens just a bit to accommodate her. TADASHI exits. All lights out on stage except for the red pin.)

CHIKAKO

I hear them outside.

TADASHI

(O. S.)

Matsuko! Get your butt in here and help me lock my little prisoner in her room. Twist the cord around this doorknob and then around that other doorknob.

MATSUKO

(O. S.)

But Tadashi--

TADASHI

(O. S.)

Do it!

CHIKAKO

I open my curtains for a little moonlight.

(A shard of moonlight appears.)

TADASHI

(O. S.)

I see that moonlight under the door! You better close those curtains!

(The shard of moonlight fades.)

CHIKAKO

I curl up on my bed and wonder what made Tadashi so angry. Maybe I shouldn't have told on him, but I'm so tired of making his bed. Mom says hes having wet dreams; she doesn't explain.

(a thoughtful pause)

Maybe one day hell like me. I'll wait. I can wait. He's my big brother.

(lights darken with sounds of low lion-like growling, frightening her)

It's so dark. I can barely see my papier-mâché bunny on the dresser. If I could see the bunny, I'd feel better. I take my fuzzy pink sweater and put it over my lamp. I turn it on. The lights so muted that hell never see it. I go to sleep finally. I go to sleep...

(lights intensify: flames in a growing fire)

... and wake up to fire. Fire and smoke! Help! The roses are on fire! Somebody help!

(she spins in the flames, coughs; exit CHIKAKO)

SATOMI

(overlapping)

Ara! Fire! Papa! The fires burning through Chikako's wall! Maybe hes killed my baby!

(As an ambulance is heard, TADASHI runs in, followed by MATSUKO who simply stares at the flames with shock and unease.)

TADASHI

Mom, what happened? Oh my god.

SATOMI

Are you satisfied? Always tormenting your sister and now you've really done it. Smoke in her lungs! And she already has asthma problems like Papa!

TADASHI

But, Mom, it wasn't my fault!

SATOMI

Don't call me Mom. I don't know how to be your mom.

TADASHI

But I didn't mean for all this to happen.

SATOMI

Will you ever understand that Chikako's not to blame for what Mama-chama did to you. And neither am I. Or you. Let it go before it destroys us all. Papa!

(VINCENT, looking disconcerted, appears.)

SATOMI

(contd.)

Papa, I told you so. I told you.

TADASHI

But, Papa, it wasn't my fault.

VINCENT

Son, you need some help.

TADASHI

Yes sir. Anything. Please help me.

SATOMI

Were sending you away. Right, Papa?

TADASHI

No, no! Not back to Mama-chama!

VINCENT

To a place where there are people who can help you.

TADASHI

You can help me, Papa, Mom, please.

VINCENT

Son, we love you and we tried and we haven't finished yet, but--

SATOMI

Yes we have. You almost killed your sister. You'll go away. Maybe they'll help you to change, to — to... what's that word you said, Papa?

VINCENT

(a pause, then:)

To reform.

(VINCENT reluctantly backs away from him and exits. MATSUKO, unable to bear anymore, exits quickly as well.)

TADASHI

But Papa! Mom? Don't you love me?

SATOMI

I'm very sorry, Tadashi, but sometimes love gets tired.

(She slowly backs away as he stares at her with longing. She exits. Lights of fire shrink to a tight spot on TADASHI as he crumples into a fetal position. Lights cross-fade.)

Act 2, Scene 3: Scene 9

Scene Nine

(Spotlight on TADASHI center stage as he mops his brow. Lights fade up downstage. MATSUKO, CHIKAKO, and SATOMI are present. TADASHI looks at them for a moment and then enters the light as the spotlight blacks out. Everybody is uncomfortable with each other.)

SATOMI

Not very good way to keep sisters safe, ne.

TADASHI

(a reflective pause, then:)

She had everything.

SATOMI

You did, too. You, too, Matsuko. But still you had to fight, fight, fight.

(a pause, then, to TADASHI:)

I trusted you.

TADASHI

All siblings fight.

SATOMI

But they don't all try to burn up the house. But only thing you really burn up is yourself. Chikako hurt, yes, but —

MATSUKO

(quietly but insistent)

Me, too, Mom.

(a pause, then:)

You, too.

SATOMI

So desu, ne. And whole town clucking their tongues. That room never stop smelling like fire.

(a pause)

Well, Tadashi?

CHIKAKO

It wasn't Tadashi who started the fire.

TADASHI

But I locked you in your room. And I wouldn't let you turn on the light.

MATSUKO

And I was there, too, making sure you were locked in good and tight.

TADASHI

I'm sorry, Baby-san.

CHIKAKO

I should thank you. It made me stronger. Lots of fires to put out in life, you know?

TADASHI

Amen to that.

CHIKAKO

(hard to say; summons the courage)

Mom, you should have fought harder for Tadashi. You didn't want to adopt him. You didn't want to forgive him the fire.

TADASHI

But Mom did want to adopt me.

(The sisters react with surprise.)

CHIKAKO

She did? I thought she resisted.

TADASHI

No. Mom was the one who pushed it through, signed the papers.

MATSUKO

Because Papa made her.

TADASHI

No. Because she wanted to. And that's enough to make her a goddess in my book. It all really began way back in Tokyo, with Mama-chama at that slum orphanage. Even though I didn't start the fire, it never would have happened if I hadn't already been on fire myself. You all take care, okay? Peace.

(starts to exit)

MATSUKO

If you walk out that door, don't come back.

TADASHI

(to MATSUKO)

Well, where the hell am I supposed to go, Mom?

(SATOMI studies him intensely, making him even more uncomfortable.)

MATSUKO

Every woman you've ever known has been your mother. I think that's why Magdalena ran for her life.

TADASHI

I was the one running for my life. She couldn't hold on.

MATSUKO

Pretty hard to hold on to something that isn't stable. That's called enabling. Uh-uh, Tadashi. It's one thing when infants go through their terrible twos, but its another thing when its a grown man going through his terrible forties. No thanks.

TADASHI

Matsuko, I've always admired your toughness. I wish I had it. Tough and beautiful.

(looks at SATOMI)

Mom. I'm sorry.

SATOMI

Sa. Okay. No fight no more.

TADASHI

Okay.

SATOMI

Tadashi?

(he stops, but does not turn around; she reveals a poem slip frayed and yellowed with age)

Here. I've been waiting to give you this. I save it with all your adoption papers. Only thing from your birth mother.

TADASHI

What is it?

SATOMI

Poem slip.

TADASHI

What does it mean?

SATOMI

Hard to translate. Something like: sometime love not enough, even when it wants to be.

TADASHI

My birth mother. In my dreams, I'm so overwhelmed with her presence that I never get around to asking questions. And there are so many.

SATOMI

Tadashi, you eat dinner? You want sukiyaki? That was your favorite.

TADASHI

(a pause, then:)

Mom? How about if I take you out to dinner?

SATOMI

Dinner? With you?

TADASHI

Uh, yeah. With me. With us. As a family.

SATOMI

I pay or you have money?

TADASHI

My treat.

SATOMI

Really? You did not rob bank, did you?

CHIKAKO

Mom.

SATOMI

(a sigh, then:)

What kind of food? I only like Oriental food.

TADASHI

Uh, sushi?

SATOMI

(a pause then:)

Okay. Let me get my jacket.

(exits)

MATSUKO

She never wants to go out. I don't believe it.

TADASHI

Me either.

CHIKAKO

Believe it.

(CHIKAKO looks at TADASHI for a moment and then embraces him. MATSUKO joins the embrace. Lights cross-fade to a table in a down stage spotlight, a table with five chairs. MATSUKO and CHIKAKO sit. SATOMI enters and TADASHI takes her by the arm. Together, they cross to the light. TADASHI seats SATOMI and then sits beside her.)

TADASHI

Well, here we are.

MATSUKO

All together again.

CHIKAKO

But the last part of the song is, who knows when we'll be all together again. What say you, big brother?

TADASHI

I'm never going to disappear again.

MATSUKO

If you do, I'll kill you.

CHIKAKO

You don't really know, do you, Tadashi? You're a child of the wind.

TADASHI

Maybe. Maybe so.

SATOMI

Tadashi? You remember when you went away and you give me nice watch? You remember?

TADASHI

Yes! I remember that watch!

SATOMI

I keep that watch.

(MATSUKO and CHIKAKO are quite surprised.)

TADASHI

(stunned)

You still have that watch after all this time? Mom, I gave that to you thirty-some years ago.

SATOMI

Every day, I wind it just a little bit. I think if it keeps on ticking, then somewhere in the world, Tadashi is okay, Tadashi's heart still beating.

TADASHI

I've missed you, Mom. All my life, I've missed you.

SATOMI

(pulls up the sleeve of her blouse and reveals--the watch)

See? The watch you give me. My Tadashi watch. Tonight, I wear it for you. And for me.

TADASHI

Mom. Oh, Mom, thank you.

SATOMI

No, Tadashi. I really didnot save you.

TADASHI

You did, Mom. You did.

SATOMI

No, no. Children, remember. Shinto teaches us: we are born pure. Whether the world pollutes you or you pollute yourself, only you can make yourself pure again.

(Lights fade slowly, cross-fading to a surreal light down stage, on the periphery of which TADASHI emerges as an old THE DAZZLER enters in costume and mask reminiscent of Komachi-Rojo [the aged poetess Komachi in the Noh play, Sekidera Komachi and slowly crosses the stage, poem slips connected to the skirt of her kimono of pine trees, a staff helping her walk, her fan tattered. She enters on one side of the stage and slowly makes her way to the opposite side, stopping center stage to look at TADASHI for a brief moment and then coming to a stop just shy of exiting, her head bent down as TADASHI gazes at her questioningly.)

THE DAZZLER

(tired, haunting voice)

Those of us who spend our lives wandering the pines, listening to the wind, are children of the wind and we have no home to call our own.

TADASHI

(as in a round, a haunting voice joining in after children of the wind)

Those of us who spend our lives wandering the pines, listening to the wind, are children of the wind and we have no home to call our own.

(THE DAZZLER kneels as pine needles fall from the sky like rain.)

THE DAZZLER

(stage whisper)

Tsuki o miru hito...

TADASHI

(stage whisper)

One who looks at the moon...

THE DAZZLER

Matsu o miru hito...

TADASHI

(stage whisper)

One who watches the pine....

(With great care, TADASHI holds THEDAZZLER as one would an infant, and gently rocks her back and forth as lights fade to black. END OF PLAY.)